

# Implementation of cross-country migration surveys in conflictaffected settings: lessons from the IS Academy survey in Burundi and Ethiopia

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### **Implementation of cross-country migration surveys in conflict-affected settings: Lessons from the IS Academy survey in Burundi and Ethiopia**

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# **Implementation of Cross-Country Migration Surveys in Conflict-Affected Settings: Lessons from the IS Academy Survey in Burundi and Ethiopia**

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## **Abstract**

The past decades have seen a rise of survey research in migration studies, which is often cross-national due to the very nature of migration. Conducting cross-country surveys presents challenges for researchers in terms of survey design, implementation, and data collection. A thematic focus on migration brings additional challenges due to the complexity of migration, issues of definitions, sampling and the geographical areas of interest. This paper gives insight into the practicalities of implementing a migration household survey in a developing country, conflict-affected setting. By focusing on these settings this paper is one of the few to target survey methodology in a non-developed country context. We highlight specific areas for attention within survey implementation stages: (1) scoping, (2) survey design, (3) training, (4) pilot, and (5) data collection. We specifically use the examples of the IS Academy project in Ethiopia and Burundi, hereby highlighting the differences between the two countries. The aim of this paper is to give practical guidelines for researchers and practitioners working in the area of migration research.

**Keywords:** cross-country survey research; migration research; conflict-affected settings; Burundi; Ethiopia

**JEL codes:** Y, Z

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# **Implementation of Cross-Country Migration Surveys in Conflict-Affected Settings: Lessons from the IS Academy Survey in Burundi and Ethiopia**

## **1. Introduction**

The topic of migration, and migration and development in particular, has risen on the development agenda in the past decades, creating a demand from both policy makers and academics for new data in the area of migration. The effects that migration can have on a micro-level (households or individuals) has become under increasing scrutiny, which made the role of surveys in migration research even more essential (Fawcett & Arnold, 1987). As the area of migration research is by definition an area that cuts across different contexts or countries (and often cultures) by the very nature of migration, research with a multi-country design is often recommended to properly understand the causes and consequences of migration (Massey, 1994; Bilsborrow, Hugo, Oberai & Zlotnik, 1997; Stillman, McKenzie & Gibson, 2007; Rallu, 2008).

When implementing cross-country surveys in general there are several challenges that the researcher faces. The current literature on cross-country survey methods builds on a long tradition of comparative methods in the social sciences (Scheuch, 1993a; 1993b) such as anthropology, cross-cultural psychology, sociology, and political science. Due to a growing number of cross-country studies in the 1960s and 1970s (Hoffmeyer-Slotnik & Harkness, 2005) many academic publications started to appear on both good and bad practices in cross-country survey research (Jowell, 1998). At present, research has well documented the challenges of cross-country survey research, hereby mostly focusing on issues such as sampling and the cross-cultural validity of survey instruments (Hoffmeyer-Slotnik & Harkness, 2005). These challenges

have also been discussed in the area of migration research, albeit not as detailed due to the relative recent interest in migration research (see Beauchemin & González-Ferrer, 2010; Carletto & De Brauw, 2007). Using cross-country survey methods to study the process of migration is additionally challenging due to the complexity of migration processes, and problems of operationalization and definitions of concepts. This paper aims to highlight these challenges and provide practical guidance for researchers working in the area of migration research who are involved in cross-country survey methods.

There is a gap in the literature on the more practical side of implementing surveys as well, both for general surveys and migration surveys in particular. Most early cross-country studies were European or American oriented and did not focus on collecting survey data in developing countries or unstable research settings. Migration surveys that focus on countries of origin of migrants are often conducted in unstable settings, such as countries that suffer from poverty or conflict. Working in these types of contexts brings additional challenges that are more of a practical nature, but that can substantially hinder the quality of the data, and hence, the research results. This paper, therefore, also seeks to add to the literature on survey implementation in a developing country context.

Drawing on the experience of implementing the IS Academy *Migration and Development: A World in Motion* Survey (hereafter referred to as the IS Academy Survey)<sup>1</sup> in Burundi and Ethiopia this paper will provide key knowledge for researchers working in migration research. Because of the histories of conflict of both countries and the fact that they are both considered amongst the least developed countries in the world

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<sup>1</sup> The IS-Academy survey is part of a Dutch government funded project on migration and development. A large component of this project is the implementation of a household survey in five countries: The Netherlands (as a migrant host country), Ethiopia, Burundi, Afghanistan and Morocco (as migrant sending countries).

this paper adds to existing literature on cross-country research in unstable settings as well. As this paper shows, the different contexts of Burundi and Ethiopia require different approaches during the process of survey implementation. Key lessons are provided for each of the five survey implementation stages: (1) scoping, (2) survey design, (3) training, (4) piloting, and (5) data collection, hereby highlighting the differences between the two countries.

The focus of this paper is on *cross-country*, *cross-national* and *cross-cultural* research challenges. In its broadest sense the term *cross-national* refers to “any research that transcends national boundaries” (Kohn, 1987, p. 714) whereas *cross-cultural* refers to “empirical studies carried out among members of various cultural groups who have had different experiences that lead to predictable and significant differences in behavior” (Brislin, 1976, p. 215). *Cross-cultural* research can thus be conducted within one place, or within one country. Both of these terms are applicable to the current study on migration and development and each term will be appropriately used for its context. For the overall survey discussed in this paper, we have chosen to use the term *cross-country research* to encompass both the *cross-national* and *cross-cultural* aspects of the study.

The following structure will be adopted for the remainder of this paper. Section 2 gives a brief background on cross-national survey methods in migration research with a specific focus on working in unstable settings. Section 3 shortly describes the two country contexts of Burundi and Ethiopia and provides a short overview of the IS-Academy Survey, while Section 4 addresses the specific cases of survey implementation in Ethiopia and Burundi following the five survey implementation stages. Key lessons are provided for each implementation stage. Section 5 concludes with a discussion of the findings.

## 2. Cross-Country Survey Methods in Migration Research

Survey methods in migration studies have surged since the early 1980s due to an increased interest in migration processes of both policy makers and academics (Bilsborrow & Oberai, 1984). Household surveys provide a comprehensive and holistic tool to measure migration processes, for many reasons (i.e. both documented and undocumented movements of people can be included). In addition, focusing on a micro-level gives the researcher the opportunity to look at spatial distributions of migration prevalence while at the same time having the possibility of aggregating the data to provide national statistics. Cross-country surveys, and especially those conducted in migrant-sending areas, are however still rare in migration research.<sup>2</sup> Some general cross-country multi-dimensional surveys include questions on migration and/or remittances, but these surveys often do not go in-depth.<sup>3</sup> Implementing cross-country surveys is a time-consuming and expensive endeavour, which is complicated by many factors, many of which are common to cross-country surveys in general.

Due to the variability of the context, many challenges that are common to survey research in general are more ‘visible’ (Kuechler, 1987, p. 233) in cross-country research. The main problems arising from the literature on cross-national or cross-cultural surveys are, among other things, the meaning of questions, the equivalence of the survey indicators, sampling bias, especially in developing countries, and more

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<sup>2</sup> Recently, however, some important cross-national migration surveys emerged such as the African Development Project (World Bank & ADB), the Development on the Move Project (IPPR & GDN), and the MAFE Project (EU).

<sup>3</sup> Examples of large-scale multi-dimensional surveys that include questions on migration and/or remittances are: the Living Standard and Measurement Survey (LSMS) of the World Bank, which incorporates a module on migration and takes remittances information in the income section, particularly in countries like Albania. Smaller amounts of migration and remittances information are usually gathered in the Labour Force Surveys (LFSs) in different countries.



practical issues such as administrative problems and diplomatic issues, which can substantially hinder good research practices (Scheuch, 1993).

In terms of survey and study design, cross-country research is complicated by cross-country variability of the variables of interest and of other, observed or unobserved, characteristics of the countries being studied (Lynn, 2003). Even though within-country variation leads to difficulties for national studies as well, cross-national studies are plagued by higher levels of heterogeneity that put pressure on equivalence issues such as the cross-national meanings of questions (Jowell, 1998). Languages that are spoken across settings, cultural differences and multi-lingual translation for example present many challenges for cross-cultural research (Temple & Edwards, 2002).

This cross-country heterogeneity is especially relevant for surveys that are conducted in migration studies. Apart from the issues that plague migration research in general (see e.g. Carletto & De Brauw, 2007; McKenzie & Sasin, 2007, for an overview), using cross-national migration surveys to make cross-national comparisons brings additional challenges. First, migration is a complex phenomenon, which is comprised of different processes and flows. Examples of migration flows are rural-urban migration, international migration, return migration, highly skilled migration, forced migration, etc. Migration processes that are important in one country might not be significantly present in another, which complicates cross-national comparisons and calls for a strong theoretical base underlining the research: “Unlike other demographic ‘events’ [...] migration is not an unambiguous demographic variable, but a theoretical construct that must be defined operationally so as to serve a particular analytical need” (Bilsborrow & Oberai, 1984, p. 8).

Due to the complexity of migration the definitions and operationalizations of concepts related to migration might differ across countries as well due to, for example,

cultural appropriateness. A good example of this is the definition of a migrant (see Carletto & De Brauw, 2007) or the definition used for a household (see Unalan, 2005), which many migration surveys use as the unit of analysis. In cross-national survey design the concept or definition of a household might differ across the research settings, which complicates comparative analyses (Carletto & De Brauw, 2007). The definition of a household (broad versus narrow) that is chosen by the researcher therefore significantly influences the results of the study.

Specific characteristics of the within-country target population such as their geographic location might further complicate cross-national survey design (Lynn, 2003). In migration surveys the challenges of locating and sampling the target population are key issues. Even though migration receives considerable attention from scholars and policy makers, migration is often a rare event (Carletto & de Brauw, 2007). Often 5 per cent or 10 per cent of the population is a migrant making it difficult to do a pure random sample. In addition, migration prevalence might differ across countries so that migrant households might be relatively easy to locate in one country and more difficult to locate in another; an issue that is highly related to the country size as well. If this is the case, different methodologies to sample the target population should be employed across countries, which complicates data analysis.

Practical factors that affect the implementation phase in cross-country studies such as the availability of target population sampling frames, regulatory or legal frameworks for doing surveys and the availability of a good survey partner might also vary across countries (Lynn, 2003). An identified gap in the literature on cross-country survey methods is, however, the role of context variables in the implementation phase such as political stability, safety and security, and the availability of infrastructure at the time of data collection. Related to factors such as political stability, is the fact that using

household survey methods in unstable settings often entails working with vulnerable populations that suffer(ed) traumatization, poverty, discrimination or social exclusion. These challenges of sensitive survey questions in vulnerable populations call for a strong basis of ethical guidelines underlining the research (see e.g. Bowers et al., 2008; Freed-Taylor, 1994 for an overview of ethical guidelines in cross-national research). Certain survey questions, for example, might be more sensitive than others in a certain area or population.

Migration research often takes place in unstable settings, especially when it focuses on migrant-sending areas in conflict-affected areas. This brings up logistical challenges and migration processes such as forced migration and return migration might represent sensitive topics for respondents in certain areas. The task of the researcher is to balance this sensitivity of questions while at the same time gaining a complete overview of migration processes and sufficient depth in the topics addressed.

### ***2.1 Strategies in cross-country survey design***

As the previous section has shown, cross-country survey methods are challenged by multiple factors, ranging from practical issues to theoretical challenges that all lead to the need for adaptations and compromises by the researchers. Especially in migration studies, designing and implementing a cross-country survey is not an easy task due to the complexity of the processes of migration, the definitions that underlie these processes, the location and sampling of the target population and the fact that migration researchers are often confronted with vulnerable populations.

To address these challenges in context variability one can choose different strategies when designing a cross-national survey. Kuechler (1987) proposes four principles for cross-national surveys measuring opinions or attitudes, stating that the

selected nations should be as similar as possible, that the sampling procedures are constant across nations, that the survey should be developed in joint cooperation with people from each nation, that data should first be analyzed separately first, and that data should be collected at multiple points in time. The author recognizes the fact that these principles are rather stringent and too demanding for different types of surveys. Lynn (2003) described different approaches researchers can utilize to manage cross-national variability, ranging from a 'maximum quality approach', in which the design is adapted to each context, to a 'consistent quality approach', in which an attempt is made to keep the cross-national research design, including for example sampling procedures and methods, equal. Other approaches, combining these two extremes can be chosen as well. Naturally, in either approach that is chosen, a thorough understanding of the context in which the survey will be conducted is essential, including the culture, history and current processes considering the variables of interest (Jowell, 1998). The following sections will explore the challenges described above for the IS Academy Survey in Burundi and Ethiopia and will elaborate on how these challenges were dealt with by providing key lessons related to each challenge.

### **3. The Case Studies: Burundi and Ethiopia**

Map 1. Ethiopia and Burundi: Geographic location



Burundi and Ethiopia are both located in Sub-Saharan Africa, with Ethiopia being officially in the Horn of Africa and Burundi considered a part of the Central African Great Lakes region (see Map 1). Both countries are two of the fifteen least developed countries in the world according to the United Nations Human Development Index (UNDP, 2010). Table 1 provides a brief overview of key statistics on each country. It is evident from Table 1 that the countries differ considerably. Ethiopia is a substantially larger country than Burundi. It covers 1,100,000 km squared and has the second largest population in Africa at approximately 78 million people. The country is very diverse and sprawling; there are forty-five different languages spoken in Ethiopia and many parts of the country are not accessible by road. Ethiopia has a system of ethnic federalism wherein the country is divided into ten regions based on ethnicity. In addition, it has tremendous variability in terms of agro-ecological zones and soil fertility within regions between the high lands and the low lands, which impacts upon the

wellbeing of households. The majority of the population lives in rural areas (83.7%) and the majority of the population is involved in agriculture (80%) (Financial Standards Forum, 2009). In 1994, Ethiopia officially became a post-conflict country; however, there has still been conflict in the North with Eritrea, yet overall, Ethiopia has had post-conflict for a decade longer than Burundi, which officially became a post-conflict state in 2005.

Burundi on the other hand, is a small country and, compared to Ethiopia, less diverse. With a surface area of 27.9 thousand square kilometres and a population of around 8.5 million people, Burundi is densely populated. It has 17 Provinces, 117 communes, 2,638 collines, and 8,103 sous-collines, which is the smallest administrative unit in the country. The majority of the country is rural and the most common economic activities are agriculture or cattle herding. Three ethnic groups live in Burundi: the Hutu, the Tutsi and the (Ba)Twa and the official languages spoken are French and Kirundi. Burundi has been plagued by waves of civil conflict since it gained independence from Belgium in 1962 and has only recently experienced a period of relative stability and peace. Partly because of the conflict period Burundi is a relatively less developed country compared to Ethiopia as the economic indicators such as GDP per capita demonstrate.

Table 1. Statistical overview of Burundi and Ethiopia

	<b>Burundi</b>	<b>Ethiopia</b>
Population (millions, 2009)	3.9	82.8
Life Expectancy at Birth (years)	51.4	56.1
Prevalence of Undernourishment in Total Population (% of population)	63.0	44.0
GDP per Capital (2008 PPP US\$)	403.0	991.0
GDP growth (avg. annual %, 2005–09)	3.5	10.7
HDI Rank	166	157
Stock of Emigrants	356,000	620,100
Emigrants as % of population	4.2	0.7
Emigration Rate of Tertiary- Educated Population	8.5	10.1
Remittance Inflows 2010e (US\$ millions)	3.0	387.0

*Source: World Bank Migration and Remittances Factbook, 2011 and UNDP Stats, 2011.*

In terms of migration, Burundi has a smaller emigrant population in absolute numbers, but the percentage of migrants is much higher compared to Ethiopia, which is mostly due to the recent conflict (see Fransen & Onga'yo, 2010, for a detailed overview of Burundi's migration history). Between 1960 and 1980 Burundi became one of the largest migrant-sending countries in the world (Spaan & Van Moppes, 2006). Since 2005 over 500,000 Burundians returned to Burundi, mainly from neighbouring Tanzania (Fransen & Kuschminder, 2012). The official emigration rate in Ethiopia is 0.7% (see Table 1), which is very low in comparison to other Sub-Saharan African countries. This low migration rate posed challenges for sampling in Ethiopia. A detailed analysis of the sampling issues in Ethiopia is outside of the scope of this paper.

The differences between the countries significantly affected the challenges faced for implementing the migration survey. In Ethiopia, the vast size and diversity of the country accounted for the greatest challenge in survey implementation. In Burundi, the recent conflict, the current fragile security situation and the fact that due to the conflict many survey topics such as ethnicity, conflict experiences, and migration experiences are considered 'sensitive' or are even prohibited to include in the survey were more prominent challenges. In both countries, the complexity in terms of historic and current

migration flows posed a challenge for survey research. These challenges were augmented by few statistics on migration available before the start of the data collection.

### ***3.1 The IS-Academy Survey in Burundi and Ethiopia***

The data collection in Burundi and Ethiopia consisted of an in-depth household survey that addressed the relationship between migration and development. In Burundi a total of 1500 households (nationally representative with urban areas included) were surveyed and an additional 810 households were surveyed in Bujumbura, Burundi's capital, based on a random sampling method. In Ethiopia, a total of 1286 surveys were completed. A purposive sampling technique was adopted and sentinel sites that were representative of the diversity in the country were chosen for enumeration. Sentinel sites were selected based on evidence from experts working on migration in Ethiopia as to the location of primary areas of emigration. Both countries employed electronic data collection and surveys were implemented with Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) in the field and CSPro software. In addition, in both countries community surveys were completed (154 in Burundi and 15 in Ethiopia) and representatives from the IS Academy Survey team worked in close cooperation with local partners who were responsible for fieldwork logistics.

## **4. From Scoping to Implementation: Key Lessons from the IS Academy Survey**

The IS Academy Survey in Burundi and Ethiopia faced three layers of challenges: (1) the challenges of cross-country survey implementation in general, (2) the challenges that arose because of the complexity of a migration survey, and (3) challenges that became apparent because of the developing and (post-) conflict context in which the



fieldwork took place. In this section the survey implementation process is split up into five stages: (1) scoping, (2) survey design, (3) training, (4) piloting, and (5) data collection. Key lessons from the IS Academy Survey will be provided for each stage of the survey implementation process.

#### ***4.1 Scoping***

Having strong local partners or external consultants is a necessity when working in other countries. A local partner knows the context well and has the knowledge to assist in local laws concerning research and fieldwork, and managing safety and security issues. Once a partner is chosen expectations should be formalized in contractual agreements (eg. liabilities in case of non-delivery etc.) (Siegel, 2012). For the IS Academy project, local partners were responsible for multiple tasks in the fieldwork implementation. These local partners were chosen after careful considerations involving scoping visits to the countries during which the IS Academy team interviewed possible partners. These country-scoping visits also enhanced the knowledge of the research team regarding the different research settings, which facilitated multiple other factors such as survey design.

The first task of local partners was to act as a cultural liaison for the field team to ensure that the survey tools and methodologies were feasible and appropriate for the local cultural context. Local partners were instrumental in the determining of sites for enumeration and for planning for the safety and security of the field crews.

In Ethiopia, the local survey partner was the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI). This is a semi-autonomous research think-tank funded by the Government of Ethiopia and International Organizations. EDRI provided local expertise, data management, field coordination and management, sampling strategy

advice and recommended individuals for field crews. In Ethiopia, the advantage of EDRI's government affiliation was that all official project documents (such as letters of request) were from the Government of Ethiopia. This encouraged participation from local administration and offered validity to the project in the Ethiopian context. The IS Academy Survey team conducted the training in Ethiopia, determined the sampling strategy and sites for enumeration, and provided continuous management of the project and field crews through-out the survey implementation in Ethiopia. EDRI provided on-going management and support for the duration of the project.

The local survey partner in Burundi was Development through Expert Consultancy (DevEC), which was a young research company with previous experience in conducting large-scale household surveys in Burundi. The selection of interviewers, fieldwork supervision, logistics, sampling, and data management was all done by DevEC. Before the start of the fieldwork DevEC received approval for the project from The Burundian Ministry of Internal Affairs and ensured that all local authorities were informed of the fieldwork prior to its commencement. This was an essential step in ensuring success in the field. One researcher working for the IS-Academy project was permanently present during the fieldwork in Burundi to be actively involved in the training of the interviewers and to supervise the data collection process.

**Key Lessons:** Having a capable local partner is extremely important. Due diligence in finding such a partner is advisable and roles and responsibilities should be clear from the beginning. In addition, project team members should work closely with the local team on location, especially during the starting phases of the data collection.

#### ***4.2 Survey design***

The largest challenges in terms of survey design for this cross-country migration survey

were the usage of definitions, the process of survey translation and the adaptations to the local context. As was already described in previous sections, there are strategies that can be adopted when designing a cross-country survey. For comparability reasons, the objective of the study was to keep the survey questionnaires and the understanding of concepts as consistent as possible across the two countries. There were some key definitions such as the definition of a household, a community, a migrant, and a return migrant that could be interpreted differently across settings. Box 1 illustrates the definitions used in the questionnaire. The definition of a household includes those living elsewhere, which is uncommon for a development questionnaire, but is essential when studying the migration dynamics of a household. For the IS Academy survey it was decided that migration and return migration would be defined by episodes that lasted a minimum of three months. This differs from the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs Statistics Department definition of migration that must last a minimum of one year (UN DESA, 1998). The decision was made consciously so that the questionnaire would be inclusive of seasonal migration that may occur for a short time such as three months, but on a yearly basis. In addition, by utilizing three months duration as a minimum and by collecting data on the duration of time abroad the data can also be analyzed at the one-year definition as a comparison for other migration research.

#### Box 1. Key definitions in the IS Academy Survey

**Household:** All individuals who are living together and have communal arrangements concerning subsistence and other necessities of life and inclusive of all individuals presently residing elsewhere (in the country or abroad) whose principle commitments and obligations are to this household.

**Migrant:** A person who currently lives in a country other than the one he/she was born in and has lived there for at least three months.

**International migration:** A move across international borders for a stay of at least three months.

**Return Migrant:** An individual who has returned to the country of origin either voluntary or forced to live fulltime after a minimum of three consecutive months living in another country.

Another challenge that was faced in the stage of the survey design was survey translation. In recognition of the importance of translation this study adopted a three-stage approach to translation: transcription, transcription review and an adjudication body (Harkness, 2003). First, individuals who were familiar with both the language and the field of migration studies transcribed the survey. In the case of Burundi this was done by a team of Bachelor's and Master's students familiar with migration studies. In the case of Ethiopia this was an Ethiopian Master of Global Studies student. The survey was then reviewed by qualified individuals (Doctoral students) that had an understanding of both migration studies and the language. The final step was to have the survey team in each country act as an adjudicating body, making the final decisions regarding which translation to adopt for the final translation (Harkness, 2003).

In Ethiopia, the team training for the survey was completed in English and supplemented by the Amharic questionnaire. Team members were responsible to review the Amharic survey and thus worked together as the final adjudication body for the translation. An example of a term that was problematic in the Ethiopian case was "abroad". In Amharic "abroad" can also mean outside of the current location (that is internal migration), it does not necessarily mean in another country. As such in both the English and Amharic version the term "abroad" was changed to "another country". A final translation challenge in Ethiopia was that Ethiopia has forty-eight different languages spoken across the country. Amharic is the official language of the country, but Oromiffa is spoken by 30% of the population and Tigrina by 8-10% of the population. Oromiffa is not officially a written language. Due to the additional challenges of further translation, it was decided not to further translate the questionnaire into the local languages.

The language situation in Burundi was less complicated, but still demanded

considerable attention. The survey was translated into French, which is one of the official languages in Burundi. However, most people still speak Kirundi, especially in the rural areas. Due to a lack of resources the survey was not translated into Kirundi. In case a respondent did not speak French the survey questions were translated on the spot by the interviewer. The language in which the survey was conducted was recorded so that comparative analyses can be done to reveal any bias that may have occurred.

While the definitions and survey question meanings were kept equal across the country, the survey had to be adapted to each country context in order to ensure maximum quality of the research (Lynn, 2003). As described, the local partners were responsible to provide local expertise and were consulted during the drafting of the questionnaire as to appropriateness of the tool for the local context. The questionnaires were further revised during the training as the enumerators and supervisors were able to offer further suggestions to ensure that the questionnaire was respectful of local cultural diversity and sensitive topics.

In Ethiopia small changes were made to the survey to adapt to the local context. It was not anticipated that trust questions would be highly sensitive in one region of the country. This was a region where recent religious violence had occurred. Respondents became uneasy with trust questions that asked if they trusted members of other communities or ethnic groups. The fieldworkers, assuring the participants that their answers were confidential and anonymous, handled this situation. A second sensitivity in Ethiopia that was not anticipated was in relation to return migration. Two issues were encountered with return migrants; the first being that some identified returned migrant's mental health was too poor to complete the interview. This occurred in a handful of cases. The second issue was that in the Oromia region local leaders and community members identified individuals as a returnee, but the individual did not identify themselves as

returnees. The reason for this was attributed to the fact that many return migrants in this area had returned from Somalia and any association with Somalia was viewed as political. Thus, individuals may have feared sharing information that could be viewed as politically sensitive.

As in Ethiopia, ethnicity is a very sensitive concept in Burundi and it is generally not accepted to refer to ethnicities in daily communication. Tensions among the different groups have not disappeared and ethnicity is still a major determinant of social relations. To deal with these tensions, the interviewer teams were constructed based on, among other characteristics such as gender and experience, the ethnicity of the interviewers. Most communities in Burundi are ethnically homogeneous, or contain at least a clear majority and minority ethnic group. The ethnicity of the interviewer team supervisor was therefore matched with the ethnicity of the group that constituted the majority in the community in areas where ethnic tensions were reported to be high. However, as the interviewer teams were ethnically mixed it was common that the interviewer and respondent were from different ethnic groups. The extent to which these possible ethnic differences between the interviewer and the respondent led to biased results is not clear. During the testing phase of the survey, certain questions on ethnicity were eliminated and others were modified to make them less difficult for the participants. Whether or not the interviewers felt comfortable asking certain questions was an important factor in the decision on deleting certain questions.

**Key lessons:** Having clear definitions of important terms in a survey is extremely important. When survey translation occurs, it is imperative that the meaning of the words is kept the same across different cultural contexts. For this reason, it is advisable to have a person that is both familiar with the language and subject content to do the translation. Another key issue is to be aware of local sensitivities and prepare for

them. Testing the questionnaire and talking to key experts is an important part of this process.

### ***4.3 Training***

The training was conducted with a consistent approach in Burundi and Ethiopia, although there was variation in the selection of the fieldworkers. In Ethiopia, 24 individuals were selected for the training and based on performance during the training, 20 were selected as enumerators. Enumerators were divided into junior and senior enumerators. Senior enumerators had worked on multiple surveys and with PDAs before. Junior enumerators had less experience and were taken on as part of the capacity building objectives of the project. Each team had two senior and two junior enumerators. The senior enumerators were responsible to provide guidance to the junior enumerators.

In Burundi most of the enumerators had previous survey experience and had worked with PDAs previously. The team consisted of both men and women, which were all between 20 and 30 years old. The majority of the enumerators had a bachelor's degree.

In both Ethiopia and Burundi, the training of the enumerators took 4 days in total. The survey training mostly focused on the structure of the survey, its content, and on explaining why certain questions were important. The definitions were also discussed elaborately and considerable time was spent on explaining the relevance of the survey and how the data would be used. The training was also used to check the translation and to discuss possible sensitive survey questions. During the trainings all enumerators and supervisors received a detailed training manual, consisting of an explanation of the project and its goals, an introduction to the surveys and a guide to

approach households. The training manual also contained a troubleshooting section, in which potential difficult situations were discussed, and a safety protocol.

**Key lessons:** Training of the surveyors is extremely important to the success of the survey and particularly the quality of answers. The number of days used for training should be dependent on the previous experience of in the interviewers. When starting from scratch, local universities are a good place to recruit interviewers. Make sure to construct a diverse research team, appropriate for the country context (with a mix of male and female interviewers, with different language abilities and from different ethnic backgrounds). Engage the enumerators; make them understand every part of the survey, including the definitions and discuss sensitivities up front.

#### ***4.4 Piloting***

Piloting of the survey was conducted as a one day addition to the training (this was not inclusive of the sampling strategy) to ensure enumerators and participants were comfortable with the survey. Prior to this an initial questionnaire test had been completed in Addis Ababa to test an early version of the survey that was then revised based on participants and enumerators feedback. For the pilot in Ethiopia the enumerators were divided into four teams and dispersed in Addis Ababa. Local guides were hired in the communities to identify migrant and return migrant households that could be interviewed. Overall the households were willing to participant and non-response was not an issue.

The pilot of the survey in Burundi was done on a weekday and took place in Gatumba, a semi-urban area just outside Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi. This area is characterized by high out-migration rates during the conflict in Burundi due to its proximity to the border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Currently, the



area has many return migrants. Due to the complexity of different migration processes this area offered a good place for the pilot.

In both countries, during the pilot the interviewers had to reach a target of three surveys. After the pilot a debriefing meeting was held to discuss all possible challenges that were encountered in terms of methodology, survey design and programming in the PDAs. Solutions were provided and key lessons were discussed for the fieldwork implementation.

**Key learning:** The use of a complex setting for the pilot is important so that interviewers already come in contact with some of the most difficult situations. During the pilot it is extremely useful to debrief the interviewers elaborately at the end of each day and to create lessons learned from the pilot for the enumerators to take with them to the field.

#### ***4.5 Data collection***

The main challenges that arose during data collection concerned the relative underdeveloped nature of infrastructure in both countries and safety issues. Many infrastructure challenges need to be taken into account for survey research. These include, but are not limited to: the quality and accessibility of roads, local transport options and distances between survey locations, availability of electricity, availability of phone services and availability of services for field crews (hotels and restaurants). For this section it is important to note that fieldwork was conducted differently in Ethiopia and Burundi; the Burundi field crews worked as one unit travelling to different parts of the country together, whereas in Ethiopia there were four different field crews that each worked in one region of the country. This meant that in Ethiopia communication issues with the management team in Addis Ababa and all of the field crews were more critical.

In both Ethiopia and Burundi the lack of physical infrastructure posed challenges to the fieldwork. Some parts of both countries were not accessible for the fieldworkers. In Burundi, even though all the provinces are accessible, some rural villages were hard to reach. In Ethiopia, some locations were so remote that field crews had to walk for 2-5 days to reach the site. Locations that were too difficult to reach were excluded from the sampling strategy so as not to prolong the fieldwork. Field crews still often had to travel great distances to reach site locations and households. In Burundi, site locations were reached by vehicle, sometimes with an additional walk, each day whereas in Ethiopia transport to the site could include walking, donkey cart, mini-bus, or any combination of different transport options. Travel between sites often meant long days of walking in both locations as households could be widely spread in rural areas.

Access to electricity was also a critical issue, especially when conducting surveys with PDAs. In Ethiopia the PDAs had an extended battery life which could be used for up to four days without being recharged. Each team was equipped with multiple paper surveys in the event that they did not have access to electricity for long durations. In Burundi, the PDAs were recharged in the cars with which the interviewer teams travelled. At the fieldwork sites, the cars with drivers would always stay available for the interviewers in case the batteries of the PDAs had to be recharged.

An important challenge in Ethiopia was limited availability of mobile phone service in the rural areas of the country. One team was only able to connect in the evenings. A second team had no mobile phone service throughout the fieldwork, which meant that they were only able to connect with the management team in Addis Ababa when they could find a hard line that was working. This posed challenges as the management team was in contact with most field crews every other day to check on progress and manage issues as they arose. It also placed teams at a greater safety risk. In

Burundi the availability of mobile phone services was not so much an issue as the team worked as one unit with constant managerial support.

Finally, access to services was important for the field crews. In Ethiopia, one site did not have any hotels or restaurants within a daily commute from the site. The team was invited to stay at a local monastery where they were provided mats for sleeping and given meals. An alternative option in Ethiopia was for crews to camp at the site. In most cases, however, field crews were able to stay at hotels. The interviewers and supervisors in Burundi mostly stayed in hotels in the province capitals. These hotels provided a good basis for the interviewer teams from which to travel to the rural areas. In the rural areas no hotels or guesthouses were available.

Both Burundi and Ethiopia are officially post-conflict countries, but safety still posed a key concern in each country. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) classifies the current status of Burundi as “peace, with implementation challenges” and the current status of Ethiopia as “peace, with unresolved border disputes” (2008, p. 30). In Burundi the security situation is still fragile and posed the largest challenge for the fieldwork. Since 2005 the country is officially considered a post-conflict country but there are still frequent reports of human rights violations and recently there are rumours of new rebel group formations in the country. Ethiopia has officially been post-conflict since 1991 with the exception of the Ethiopian-Eritrean war until in 2000. There is still continuous conflict along the Ethiopia- Eritrean border.

In Ethiopia in the Northern Region of Tigray, teams were conducting surveys close to the Eritrean border and had to be cautious of their safety. The sampling strategy had to be altered in this region for safety reasons as well. At the time of survey implementation there was discussion in the local news of renewed conflict with Eritrea and that the Ethiopian army was preparing to invade Eritrea. The field crews had to be

cautious at all times while working in this area. In Ethiopia there were also unanticipated security issues in the Western Region of Oromia. The initial woreda selected for enumeration in this zone was determined unsafe for fieldwork activity due to recent violence. A different woreda was selected for enumeration that was deemed safe. The situation was assessed by calling local contacts living in the area to ensure that there were no safety concerns.

The security situation in Burundi affected many aspects of the fieldwork process. First of all, travelling during the evenings and nights was not possible, which highly restricted the working time of the interviewer teams. Second, supervision of the IS-Academy researcher was not possible in certain areas due to safety concerns. Even though the areas were safe for the interviewers and local supervisors different safety concerns had to be taken into account for the foreign IS-Academy researcher. The security situation of the fieldwork sites was evaluated daily in close cooperation with our local research partner, the interviewers and field supervisors. Within the original sampling strategy the security situation was not taken into account, because security changes quickly and an area that might be safe to work in today might not be safe to work in tomorrow. Staying flexible in this regard was vital for implementation. Fortunately no areas were sampled that in the end deemed inaccessible due to security reasons.

**Key lessons:** Since infrastructure is often a key challenge in developing countries, knowledge of what is and is not possible (for instance, with regard to electricity, mobile phone coverage, accommodation, etc.), is imperative and should be planned for. Planning ahead is extremely important and being aware of different scenarios of possible problems and how they should be dealt with should be part of the overall project planning. Awareness of safety issues is imperative and you must be

willing to be flexible in order to keep interviewers and team members safe.

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Creating a cross-national research design is a challenge, which is often accompanied with many compromises that have to be made along the way (Kuechler, 1987). As migration surveys are becoming increasingly implemented across country settings, this paper addressed specific issues with regard to this type of research and gives some solutions for addressing these issues. However, this paper should also be seen as a reference for setting up and implementing migration survey research in developing countries particularly in settings that call for additional safety concerns. Predominantly in the area of migration survey implementation in a developing country and conflict-affected context, this paper gives key recommendations on how to run a survey more effectively. Aspects with respect to survey implementation in these settings to which particular attention is paid to are: the scoping stage, survey design, training and piloting, and data collection.

The IS Academy project in Burundi and Ethiopia faced the challenge of creating one single research design to analyze the impact of migration on development in two very different contexts. The countries differ substantially in size, population, culture, within-country variation, and not the least, migration dynamics. The survey and the methodology were, therefore, adapted to each context in order to do justice to the countries' specificities in terms of migration and development. This is in accordance with the 'maximum quality approach' in survey research as proposed by Lynn (2003), in which separate approaches are taken for each context based on a thorough understanding of these contexts and their restraints. The actual survey and the survey

method, however, were kept mostly similar in the countries so that comparative analyses are an option.

At the same time the project implementation was challenged by country specific aspects such as infrastructure development and safety and security issues. The key lessons that were derived from each section were that a) having a good local partner is extremely important and project team members should work closely with the local team on location, b) clear definitions of important terms in a survey are a necessity and local sensitivities of survey topics should be taken into account, c) the research team should be engaged in the research process and the team should be diverse and constructed with a thorough understanding of the local context's cultural norms, d) a good pilot including an elaborate debriefing is a necessity, and e) a thorough understanding of the local challenges in terms of infrastructure and safety are a key component as well as scenarios ready for dealing with them.

In general, flexibility is a necessity for successful survey implementation, as well as a thorough understanding of the specific country context in which the survey will be conducted, including the culture, history and current processes considering the variables of interest (Jowell, 1998). Given the challenges described above, designing and implementing a cross-national migration survey is not an easy task (Bilsborrow & Oberai, 1984): "There is no ideal migration survey questionnaire, just as there is no ideal survey design. [...] As such, it is unlikely that questionnaire or survey design applicable in one country or even region in one country would be equally appropriate in another" (p. 8). Like with cross-national survey design in general, the challenge is to balance between data comparability across countries and the extent to which the data does justice to the particular country case.



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